

FEATS OF MAGIC

Among the Orientals Surpasses
Our Ablest Efforts.

IN OCCULT SCIENCE THEY ARE

Vastly Superior to Americans and
Europeans—Mysterious Feat of the
Priests of Pele Who Walk Barefoot
On White Heated Lava—Other
Marvelous Demonstrations of Their
Magic.

"Did it ever occur to you," said a globe-trotter who is now quartered in one of the big downtown hotels of this city, "that the attitude of superiority assumed by the people of Europe and America in their relations with the East Indian, Chinese and Polynesian Islanders is somewhat ridiculous in several instances. Now, for instance, it is admitted that in a thousand and one ways the native-born citizen of an American or European state excels the dweller in the Orient, but if you should happen to ask him if he and his kind were inherently and universally the superiors of their Eastern brothers he would unhesitatingly reply that they were. But as a matter of fact we are 'back yonder' when it comes to occultism. Here and in Europe there is a scattering of devotees to mysticism and the occult, but in the regard of the bulk and mass of the citizens these devotees are regarded as cranks or hair-brained enthusiasts, and I might add justly so. Over in the Orient it is quite different, for in that section of the world the people have developed the human possibilities of the occult to such a degree that they can go into realms impossible to the Western and ignorant mind. Even in our new possession, the Hawaiian Islands, there is a wonderful class called Kahunas or witch doctors, who give the most astounding exhibitions of the refinement of that mental faculty.

"About a year ago I made a visit to Hawaii, and among other things the announcement of an apparently impossible feat attracted my attention. It was an advertisement in one of the daily papers of Honolulu to the effect that on the next day a great Kahuna, Papa Ita by name, with the aid of Pele, the great goddess of eternal fire, would walk barefooted across thirty feet of white-hot lava! I snorted when I read the announcement and commented on the intelligence of the Hawaiian people for believing such rot in no complimentary terms. But, just the same, when the hour of the exhibition arrived I was on hand and paid my half dollar along with about 400 other credulous residents and visitors. Out in the district that had been swept by fire during the visitation of the bubonic plague in the preceding year the Kahuna had caused to be erected a high board fence, inclosing possibly an acre of land. Rough benches had been provided all around four sides of the inclosure, leaving an open space in the center of perhaps 50 by 40 feet. A great pit had been dug in this space, fully 30 feet long, half as broad, and some 6 feet deep. This pit had been filled with dry wood and kindling, and early in the day fire had been applied to it, and as the flames hissed and sparkled, great rough pieces of lava had been piled in the raging fire and allowed to remain until the fuel was exhausted. The lava stones were shimmering with heat when the crowd arrived. The people sitting in the front rows had to protect their faces from its intensity, and up through the interstices in the lava little tongues of flames shot up and licked the sides of the ardent stone. There was no question about its being hot—it was.

"The benches filled rapidly," continued the narrator, "and about 4 o'clock in the tropical afternoon there came a stir at the gate and the tall, straight figure of an aged man appeared in view. He was dressed in a single garment, something like the senatorial toga of ancient Rome, having a border of scarlet. His feet were bare, and as he stalked in the arena his white hair and calm, almost cold, expression gave even me a sensation that perhaps after all, there might be something in the show. He carried in his hand a stalk of the sacred ti plant, a shrub something like a common cattail, and when the attention of the entire crowd had been centered upon him, he commenced a wild chant in the musical tongue of the South Seas. He chanted and sang for perhaps two minutes, and then, with an invocation to Pele, he bent and struck the ground with the ti plant three times and walked across the 30 feet of white-hot lava. I was dumfounded. I could not believe my eyes. But it was nevertheless a fact. I examined Papa Ita's feet afterward and they were absolutely free from fire or traces of it. I kept thinking about the exhibition all through that night, and even went so far as to inquire of several of the Honolulu physicians whether it was possible for human tissue to withstand that degree of heat. They told me it was not, and thus verified my own ideas on the subject.

"I am something of a believer in the reasoning of A. Conan Doyle, and especially where he lays down as a basic principle of analysis that in considering any problem, 'when you have eliminated all the impossible factors, that which remains, however improbable, must be the truth.' I reasoned and reasoned and finally came to the conclusion that, as human tissue could not possibly come in contact with white-hot stone and suffer no injury, Papa Ita had not walked across the lava. It was true I saw him do it, and it was improbable that my eyes had deceived me, but it was impossible that he could have done it and escaped unburned. Therefore, on the following day I went again to see the second performance. But in order to test the matter a little more fully I took along a camera. The show was exactly like the former one, except that the crowd was larger and the fire hotter. I stationed myself in the front row, directly opposite the middle of the pit, and when Papa Ita appeared I watched him as attentively as I had on the former occasion. The details were just the same as before. Papa Ita sang and chanted and waved his ti leaves and started on his quick walk over the lava, and when he was right in front of me I aimed the camera and pushed the button. The Kahuna passed on over the rest of his journey and was subjected to the congratulations and examinations of the crowd as on the preceding day. I hurried back to the hotel and secured a dark room and developed that plate. I worked over it with care, and when I had finished I did not have a mark representing Papa Ita. The fire was there, the crowd on the other side of the arena could be distinguished,

but there was no sign of the fire walker. Now, I never had very much experience with hypnotism, but if that old Kahuna did not hypnotize that crowd I am willing to have some one come forward with a more plausible explanation.

"In the audience," continued the traveler, "there were representatives of every nation and people I ever heard of, barring the Eskimo. There were hard-headed Americans, resident and wandering Englishmen, and with them their wives and sweethearts, Russians, French, Japs and Chinese; but the bulk of the crowd was made up of native Hawaiians. Papa Ita showed by virtue of the direct countenance of ex-Queen Liliuokalani, and members of the royal household, were present as witnesses to the exhibition. The queen is yet in power in that land, and when she places the seal of her approval on anything it goes, and, as the saying is, 'goes big.' The Hawaiians turned out in force, and after seeing the aged Priest of Pele walk harmlessly through the flames they accepted him as a great Kahuna, and many were the pieces of gold and silver they showered upon him.

"His patron deity is said to dwell up in the crater of one of the vast volcanoes of the island of Hawaii. There, in a place such as exists nowhere else on earth, the Hawaiians have enshrined Pele. She is supposed to be quite a bloodthirsty goddess, as goddesses go, and in former times a large number of stranded mariners went up as incense to her. The ancient custom required a human sacrifice every little while, and the way the followers of Pele operated was this: They first caught their sailor and then carried him willy nilly up the steep lava-colored sides of Mount Loa. The mountain is some 13,000 feet high, and the climb sometimes claimed the life of the victim before he could be presented in proper form to the goddess. When these rites were of common occurrence there was a white-hot lake of lava in Mount Loa's crater. The unfortunates were obliged to do a little trick walking on this hot lake, and usually lasted long enough to take about three steps. Then they fell down and the nostrils of Pele were gratified by the smell of the burning bodies. If they had only learned Papa Ita's little plan, no doubt many of them would have lived to a green old age or become Kahunas and received much largess from the monarchs and priests."

The Figure of the Moon.

The form of our satellite is that of an ellipsoid of revolution with its axes almost equal. Theoretical considerations led various mathematicians, notably Hansen, to the conclusion that the longest axis was directed towards the earth. Prof. Franz, director of the observatory of Breslau, from a series of precise measurements on negatives taken at the Lick Observatory arrives at the result that the difference between the axes is imperceptible. The subject has lately been investigated by M. Mainka with the heliometer, and he concludes that the axis directed toward the earth is not above four-tenths of one per cent longer than the other—a quantity of the same order as the errors of observation.

Lions Angered by Mirrors.

"Lions object to mirrors," observes a keeper in a menagerie. "On one occasion a looking glass in the hands of a small boy so frightened and excited our largest lion that we feared he would injure himself. The wretched youngster had drawn a hand mirror from beneath his coat and held it before the face of the king of beasts. The latter looked and jumped for the rival whom he thought he saw. The bars of his cage dashed him back again and again, while he filled the whole house with terrific roars. I have known several other cases in which lions have been thrown into the wildest panic merely by a mirror being held up before them."

Husbands' Motto a Bible Verse.

The Husbands' Protection Society, of London, has as its motto the naive verse found in what is known as the Wife Beater's Bible, published in 1549, copies of which may be found in many museums and libraries. This verse is as follows: "He dwelleth with his wife according to his knowledge and taketh her as a necessary healer and not as a bond servant or a bond slave. And if she be not obedient and helpful to him he endeavoureth to bate the fear of God into her head that thereby she may be compelled to learn her dutie and to do it."

The Deepest Well in the World.

The deepest of all borings is at Parandowitz, near Ratibor, in Silesia, where the Prussian government sunk a well 2,033.34 metres below the surface (nearly 6,575 feet). The diameter of the boring diminishes from 0.092 metre to 0.069. The upper part of the well is lined. Observations of temper have been made every thirty-one metres throughout the depth and the average depth corresponding to an increase of one degree C. in the mean temperature is 34.1 metres. The results are practically the same as those obtained in the well of Schlachbach, situated near by, which is only 295 metres less deep.

The King's Slight Mistake.

The King of Siam is not as yet a Shakespearean scholar. On the recent occasion of his visit to Denmark he accompanied the Crown Prince to Helsingfors and was duly conducted to the grave of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. Here he took off his hat and stood for a moment in reverential silence. Then, turning to the Crown Prince, he said, with deep sympathy: "A relation of Your Royal Highness, I presume. Has he been long dead?"

Prospects for Elks' Carnival.

Victor D. Leavitt, general manager of the Bostock Midway Carnival Company, and Col. Francis Ferari are in Washington, and will be here during the continuance of the midwinter carnival, which is to be held under the auspices of the Washington Lodge B. P. O. E., at Convention Hall, February 3 to 15. The Elks Carnival will surpass anything ever heretofore given of the kind. It opens Monday night at Convention Hall, and will continue until February 15. All of Washington is going to see the Elks' Carnival and Vaudeville.

Duly Thankful.

And now one of the professors says it will be 10,000,000 years before the sun goes out. Thanks! We are in of just that sort of consolation every time we're called on to settle the gas bill.

BAFFLED VILLAINY

From the Recollections of a
Literary Police Officer

FOR SUNDAY GLOBE READERS

Notes of the Bank of England and
the Agent's Story at Scotland Yard
—Rifling of an Iron Chest by Sup-
posed False Keys—Detective Saga-
city Demonstrated in a Singularly
Brilliant Manner—An Absorbingly
Interesting Story.

The respectable agent of a rather eminent French house arrived one morning in great haste and apparent distress at Scotland Yard, and informed the superintendent that he had just sustained a great, almost ruinous loss, in notes of the Bank of England and commercial bills of exchange, besides a considerable sum in gold. He had, it appeared, been absent in Paris about ten days, and on his return but a few hours previously, discovered that his iron chest had been completely rifled during his absence. False keys must have been used, as the empty chest was found locked, and no sign of violence could be observed. He handed in full written details of the property carried off, the numbers of the notes, and every other essential particular. The first step taken was to ascertain if any of the notes had been tendered at the bank. Not one had been presented; payment was of course stopped, and advertisements descriptive of the bills of exchange, as well as of the notes, were inserted in the evening and following morning papers. A day or two afterward considerable reward was offered for such information as might lead to the apprehension of the offenders. No results followed; in spite of the active exertions of the officers employed, not the slightest clew could be obtained to the perpetrators of the robbery. The junior partner in the firm, M. Bellebon, in the meantime arrived in England to assist in the investigation, and was naturally extremely urgent in his inquiries; but the mystery which enveloped the affair remained impenetrable. At last a letter, bearing the St. Martin-le-Grand post-mark, was received by the agent, M. Alexandre le Breton, which contained an offer to surrender the whole of the plunder, with the exception of the gold, for the sum of one thousand pounds. The property which had been abstracted was more than ten times that sum, and had been destined by the French house to meet some heavy liabilities falling due in London very shortly. Le Breton had been ordered to pay the whole amount into Hoare's to the account of the firm, and had indeed been severely blamed for not having done so as he received the different notes and bills; and it was on going to the chest immediately on his return from Paris for the purpose of fulfilling the peremptory instructions he had received, M. le Breton discovered the robbery.

The letter went on to state that should the offer be accepted to, a mystically worded advertisement—of which a copy was inclosed—was to be inserted in the *Times*, and then a mode would be suggested for safety—in the interest of the thieves, of course—carrying the agreement into effect. M. Bellebon was half inclined to close with this proposal in order to save the credit of the house, which would be destroyed unless its acceptance, now due in about fourteen days, could be met, and without the stolen francs and bills of exchange this was, he feared, impossible. The superintendent, to whom M. Bellebon showed the letter, would not hear of compliance with such a demand, and threatened a prosecution for composition of felony if M. Bellebon persisted in doing so. The advertisement was, however, inserted, and an immediate reply directed that Le Breton, the agent, should present himself at the Old Manor House, Green Lanes, Newington, unattended, at 4 o'clock on the following afternoon, bringing with him, of course, the stipulated sum in gold. It was added that to prevent any possible treason (*trahison*), the letter was written in French. Le Breton would find a note for him at the tavern informing him of the spot—a solitary one and far away from any place where an ambush could be concealed—where the business would be concluded, and to which he must proceed unaccompanied and on foot. This proposal was certainly quite as ingenious as it was cool, and the chance of outwitting such cunning rascals seemed exceedingly doubtful. A very tolerable scheme was, however, hit upon, and M. le Breton proceeded at the appointed hour to the Old Manor House. No letter or message had been left for him, and nobody obnoxious to the slightest suspicion could be seen near or about the tavern. On the following day another letter arrived, which stated that the writer was quite aware of the trick which the police had intended playing him, and he assured M. Bellebon that such a line of conduct was unwise as it would be unfruitful, inasmuch as if "good faith" was not observed the securities and notes would be inexorably destroyed or otherwise disposed of, and the house of Bellebon & Company be consequently exposed to the shame and ruin of bankruptcy.

Just at this crisis of the affair I arrived in town from an unsuccessful hunt after some fugitives who had slipped through my fingers at Plymouth. The superintendent laughed heartily, not so much at the trick by which I had been duped, as at the angry mortification I did not affect to conceal. He presently added: "I have been wishing for your return, in order to entrust you with a tangled affair, in which success will amply compensate for such a disappointment. You know French, too, which is fortunate; for the gentleman who has been plundered understands little or no English." He then related the foregoing particulars, with other apparently slight circumstances, and after a long conversation with him, I decided to think the matter over and decide upon the likeliest mode of action. After much cogitation I determined to see M. Bellebon alone, and for this purpose I dispatched the waiter of the tavern adjacent to his lodgings with a note expressive of my wish to see him instantly on pressing business. He was at home and immediately acceded to my request. I easily introduced myself, and after about a quarter of an hour's conference said carelessly—for I saw he was too heedless of speech, too quick and frank, to be intrusted with the dim suspicions which certain trifling indices had suggested to me—"Is Monsieur le Breton at the office where the robbery was committed?"

"No, he is gone to Greenwich on business and will not return till late in the evening. But if you wish to examine the place I can of course enable you to do so."

"It will, I think, be advisable; and you will, if you please," I added as we emerged into the street, "permit me to take you by the arm in order that the official character of my visit may not be suspected by any one there."

He laughingly complied and we arrived at the house arm-in-arm. We were admitted by an elderly woman; and there was a young man—a mustached clerk—seated at a desk in an inner room writing. He eyed me for a moment, somewhat askance, I thought, but I gave him no opportunity for a distinct view of my features, and I presently handed M. Bellebon a card on which I had contrived to write unobserved, "Send away the clerk." This was more naturally done than I anticipated, and in answer to M. Bellebon's glance of inquiry, I merely said, "That as I did not wish to be known there as a police officer, it was essential that the minute search I was about to make should be without witnesses." He agreed and the woman was also sent away upon a distant errand. Every conceivable place did I ransack; every scrap of paper that had writing on it I eagerly perused. At length the search was over, apparently without result.

"You are quite sure, Monsieur Bellebon, as you informed the superintendent that Monsieur le Breton has no female relations or acquaintances in this country?"

"Positive," he replied, "I have made the most explicit inquiries on the subject, both of the clerk DuBarle and of the woman servant."

Just then the clerk returned, out of breath, with haste, I noticed, and I took my leave without even now affording the young gentleman so clear a view of my face as he was evidently anxious to obtain.

"No female acquaintance!" I thought, I as I entered the private room of the tavern I had left an hour before. "From whom came, then, these scraps of perfumed paper I have found in my desk, I wonder?"

I sat down and endeavored to piece them out, but after considerable trouble, satisfied myself that they were parts of different notes, and so small, unfortunately, as to contain nothing which separately afforded me any information except that they were all written by one hand, and that a female one.

About two hours after this I was sauntering along in the direction of Stoke-Newington, where I was desirous of making some inquiries as to another matter, and had passed the Kingslaw gate a few hundred yards, when a small discolored printed handbill lying in a haberdasher's shop window arrested my attention. It ran thus: "Two guineas reward—Lost, an Italian grayhound. The tip of his tail has been chopped off, and it answers to the name of Fidele." Underneath, the reader was told to "inquire within."

"Fidele!" I mentally exclaimed. "Any relation to M. le Breton's fair correspondent Fidele, I wonder?" In a twinkling my pocketbook was out and I reperused by the gas light one of the perfumed scraps of paper, the following portion of a sentence, "*ma pauvre Fidele est perdue*." The bill, I observed, was dated nearly three weeks previously. I forthwith entered the shop and, pointing to the bill, said I knew a person who had found such a dog as was there advertised for. The woman at the counter said she would be glad to hear it, as the lady, formerly a customer of theirs, was much grieved at the animal's loss.

"What is the lady's name?" I asked.

"I can't rightly pronounce the name," was the reply. "It is French, I believe; but here it is with the address in the day-book written by herself." I eagerly read: "Madame Levasseur, Oak Cottage; about one mile on the road from Edmonton to Southgate." The handwriting greatly resembled that on the scraps I had taken from M. le Breton's desk, and the writer was French, too. Here were indications of a trail which might lead to unhelped-for success, and I determined to follow it up vigorously. After one or two other questions, I left the shop, promising to send the dog to the lady the next day. My business at Stoke-Newington was soon accomplished. I then hastened westward to the establishment of a well-known dog fancier, and procured the loan, at a reasonable price, of an anglo-Italian hound; the requisite loss of the tip of its tail was very speedily accomplished, and so quickly healed that the newness of the excision could not be suspected. I arrived at the lady's residence about twelve o'clock on the following day so thoroughly disguised as a vagabond Cockney dog stealer, that my own wife, when I entered the breakfast parlor just previous to starting, screamed with alarm and surprise. The mistress of Oak Cottage was at home, but indisposed, and the servant said she would take the dog to her, though, if I would take it out of the basket, she herself could tell me if it was Fidele or not. I replied that I would only show the dog to the lady, and would not trust it out of my hands. This message was carried up stairs, and after waiting outside some time for the woman with natural precaution, considering my appearance for the safety of the portable articles lying about, had closed the street door in my face. I was readmitted, desired to wipe my shoes carefully, and walk up. Madame Levasseur, a showy-looking woman, though not over-refined in speech or manners, was seated on a sofa in vehement expectation of embracing her dear Fidele, but my vagabond appearance so startled her that she screamed loudly for her husband, M. Levasseur. This gentleman, a fine, tall, whiskered, mustached person, hastened into the apartment half shaved, and with his razor in his hand.

"Qu'est ce qu'il y a doc?" he demanded. "Mais voyez cette horreur la," replied the lady, meaning me, not the dog, which I was slowly emancipating from the basket kennel. The gentleman laughed, and reassured by the presence of her husband, Madame Levasseur's anxieties concentrated themselves upon the expected Fidele.

"Mais mon Dieu!" she exclaimed again, as I displayed the aged beauty I had brought for her inspection, "why that is not Fidele!"

"Not marm?" I answered with quite innocent surprise. "Vy ere is her very tall," and I held up the mutilated extremity for her closer inspection. The lady was not, however, to be convinced even by that evidence, and as the gentleman soon became impatient of my persistence and hinted very intelligently that he had a mind to hasten my passage down stairs with the toe of his boot, I, having made the best possible use of my eyes during the short interview, scrambled up the dog and basket and departed.

[To be continued.]

Out of Practice.

Mrs. Van Dauber (critically)—Poor thing? This picture of Mrs. Smith looks as if she hadn't a particle of spirit left.

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